IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, VS. Criminal No. 20-168 GEORGE ALLEN, Defendant. Transcript of proceedings on December 1, 2021 United States District Court, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, before Judge Arthur J. Schwab. APPEARANCES: For the Government: Jonathan Lusty, Esq. For the Defendant: Patrick K. Nightingale, Esq. Court Reporter: Marsia L. Balobeck Proceedings recorded by mechanical stenography; transcript produced by computer-aided transcription.

## PROCEEDINGS

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THE COURT: Good morning. I apologize for keeping

MR. NIGHTINGALE: Good morning, Your Honor.

MR. LUSTY: Good morning, Your Honor.

THE COURT: This is the time and place set for sentencing in criminal number 20-00168. I'd ask counsel for the government to enter your appearance, please.

MR. LUSTY: May it please the court, Jonathan Lusty on behalf of the government.

THE COURT: And for the defendant, please?

MR. NIGHTINGALE: Patrick Nightingale on behalf of Mr. Allen. And this is Mr. Allen seated with me at counsel table.

THE COURT: Welcome to both of you.

Mr. Allen, would you kindly stand to be sworn, please.

(GEORGE ALLEN was duly sworn)

THE COURT: Since we're spaced apart, if you wish, you can take your mask down. That's your own personal decision.

Sir, do you understand that having been sworn, your answers to my questions are subject to the penalties of perjury if you do not answer truthfully?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, Your Honor.

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THE COURT: Do you want to pull the microphone a little closer, please?

Court notes on July 22, 2021, pursuant to a plea agreement, defendant entered a plea of guilty to count one of a one-count indictment charging the defendant with obstruction of law enforcement during a civil disorder in violation of Title 18 United States Code Section 231(a)(3) and Section 2.

Following the guilty plea, the court directed the probation office to prepare a pre-sentence investigation report and set a sentencing hearing for November 10, 2021.

At that sentencing hearing the court was made aware the defendant had filed a sentencing memorandum with exhibits under seal which had not yet been filed on the court docket. The court then rescheduled this sentencing hearing for today in order to review defendant's sentencing memorandum and exhibits thereto.

The court has received and reviewed the pre-sentence investigation report, addendum thereto, prepared by the United States probation office. The Court has also reviewed the defendant's position, indicating he has no objections to the pre-sentence investigation report. The government did not file a position with respect to the pre-sentence investigation report.

The court has also reviewed the sentencing memorandum

submitted by the government, and the sentencing memoranda filed by the defendant under seal, including said exhibits.

Notably, the defendant's sentencing memorandum requested a downward variance from the advisory guideline sentence of 8 to 14 months to a sentence of non-confinement so the defendant could continue his mental health treatment for his mental health disorders, pursue employment as a commercial truck driver, and continue to care for his three children. I will address defendant's request for a variance in a few moments. The court has also reviewed letters from defendant's family and friends. Finally, the court has also reviewed the sentencing recommendation prepared by the probation office.

Sir, you entered a plea of guilty in this courtroom to count one of a one-count indictment at criminal number 20-00168, charging you with obstruction of law enforcement during a civil disorder in violation of Title 18 United States Code Section 231(a)(3) and Section 2. Correct, sir?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Following your guilty plea, I directed the probation office to prepare a pre-sentence investigation report. I've reviewed the pre-sentence investigation report and addendum thereto and the sentencing recommendation of the probation office. Pursuant to the standing order of the Board of Judges of this district, the court finds it's not appropriate to disclose the recommendation of the probation

your client?

office to parties nor to counsel; however, sir, in determining your sentence the court will not consider any matter that's not previously been disclosed to you or your counsel.

Counsel, have you reviewed the pre-sentence

investigation report, addendum thereto and discussed them with

MR. NIGHTINGALE: Yes, I have, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Are there any errors in the pre-sentence investigation report or addendum that you not previously called to the court's attention?

MR. NIGHTINGALE: There are not, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Sir, have you reviewed the pre-sentence investigation report, addendum thereto and other matters and discussed them with your attorney?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Counsel, is there any legal cause why sentence should not be pronounced?

MR. NIGHTINGALE: No, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Anything else you would like to say or the defendant would like to say, now would be the appropriate time, please.

MR. NIGHTINGALE: Thank you, Your Honor. Obviously the arguments that we're making on behalf of Mr. Allen were set forth in the sentencing memorandum that the court has reviewed.

At the outset, I would say that my client comes before the court humbled by his conduct. As I've indicated in my sentencing memorandum, not only is he facing conviction and sentencing in federal court, but he also has a state court aggravated assault charge involving the same incident with the police officer who was injured. In that case, there's an agreement to a period of probation for his felony aggravated assault plea. And that sentence would only have been agreed upon with the consent of the officer. Fortunately, that officer was not seriously injured. It was a very minor injury. And it's something for which my client has great regret, having been acted out in that fashion.

As we argue in our sentencing memorandum, his criminal conduct that day was something that was triggered or a reaction to the passion of the moment.

That day, the march had been almost a two and a half hour march through Downtown Pittsburgh that ended up close to Mellon Arena, the Veterans Square area, at which time people seemed unsure of what to do.

My wife and my stepdaughter and I participated in the peaceful march. And once it seemed to stall at that intersection, we departed. And quite frankly, were parked outside of the Gulf Tower, where my office is, and by the time we had made it down to our vehicle at the Gulf Tower, unfortunately, things had gone awry, for lack of a better

term.

The incident when a young man was jumping up and down on top of a police car, and then the vehicle was set afire and incidents of throwing bottles of water at mounted police. And as this was all taking place, additional tactical units arrive. And my client reacted by throwing a piece of cinder block at one of those units.

Fortunately, like I said, the officer was not injured and that was the extent of my client's criminal conduct that day.

We have the benefit of extensive amounts of video footage from that afternoon all through the evening, depicting looting and rioting in Downtown Pittsburgh. My client was distinctively dressed, and that was what led to his identification. And he was not identified or did not participate in any of that continuing criminality. Unlike other defendants who have come before this court, his act did not serve to trigger others, it would seem. It was a very brief act of responding to a highly stressful situation.

For the reasons set forth in our sentencing memorandum, my client's role as a father, the fact that he is employed full-time right now and will be seeking work as a commercial truck driver in the spring, his family obligations, his lack of any serious criminal history other than a DUI and a theft charge, for which he was on ARD, and the fact that now

he will be a federal felon and a state felon for the rest of his life, barring any type of a pardon, considering his mental health history, his mental health treatment and the role that his anxiety and depression diagnosis and undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder, which was very likely in play at the time of this incident, for all of those reasons, Your Honor, we are requesting that this court impose a sentence of non-confinement, either a probationary sentence or house arrest, followed by supervised release.

But I would submit that when considering my client's history, his lack of criminal history, and the nature of this incident that that would be an appropriate sentence in this matter. Thank you.

THE COURT: Thank you for your excellent memorandum of law. Sir, anything you wish to say?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes. First and foremost, just wanted to say that I am sorry and I apologize to the officer -- the officers involved. I understand how reckless and dangerous my behavior was that day. That wasn't my intention, but that doesn't excuse the fact. I'm looking -- I want to spend time with my kids, I don't want to miss out on their lives. So I definitely understand the severity of my actions. And I just wanted to go on record by apologizing.

THE COURT: Are you satisfied with the service and representation provided by your attorney?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Has he done everything you've asked him to do?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Is there anything you believe he should not have done?

THE DEFENDANT: No, Your Honor.

THE COURT: On behalf of the government, please?

MR. LUSTY: Yes. Just briefly, Your Honor. You have had the benefit of sitting in many of these pleas and sentencings, so you're fully aware of what happened on this day.

At the time of the incident, the police were attempting to get out of the area. The area had escalated to violence, people were coming down from the arena towards where the police were. And this vehicle was actually trying to make a U-turn to get out, to get to safety, instead of escalating the situation. And at that point, the defendant, as previously discussed, took a piece of concrete and threw it through the window. This was a situation where tensions were rising and the defendant chose to take a piece of concrete and throw it in the direction of the officers. Based on the sentences other individuals have received, the government is recommending a guidelines sentence as well in this case.

THE COURT: Which is --

MR. LUSTY: 8 to 14 months.

THE COURT: Imprisonment?

MR. LUSTY: Yes.

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THE COURT: The United States sentencing guidelines are advisory only. The court has discretion to vary or deviate from guidelines after considering the relevant conduct and factors set forth in Title 18 United States Code Section 3553(a). The court must rule on any motions for departure, requests for variance.

Defendant's offense level is 11 and his criminal history category is I. The applicable advisory guideline range is 8 to 14 months imprisonment, probation of one to five years, supervised release of one to three years, a fine of \$4,000 to \$40,000, restitution of \$599.21, and a special assessment of \$100.

On behalf of the government, did I accurately state defendant's offense level, criminal history category and advisory guideline range?

MR. LUSTY: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Do you agree?

MR. NIGHTINGALE: I do, Your Honor.

THE COURT: As stated a few minutes ago, defendant has requested a downward variance from the advisory guidelines sentence to a sentence of non-confinement. As I will explain in greater detail in a few moments, taking into consideration

the factors set forth in Title 18 United States Code Section 3553(a), as applied to the facts of this case. Defendant's request for downward variance is denied because the court finds a sentence within the advisory guidelines is sufficient, but no greater than necessary to satisfy the purposes of sentencing, including just punishment, deterrence, protection of the public and rehabilitation of the defendant.

Sir, your sentence is as follows: Pursuant to the Sentencing Reform Act of 1984, it is the judgment of the court that the defendant be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of 12 months and one day. Defendant's term of imprisonment is to be followed by three years of supervised release.

In addition, it is further ordered that the defendant shall pay restitution to the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police in the amount of \$599.21. Payments to be sent to the Clerk of Court, Joseph F. Weis, Jr. United States Courthouse, 700 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 15219, to be forwarded then to the victim.

Defendant shall make restitution payments from any wages he may earn in prison in accordance with the Bureau of Prisons Inmate Financial Responsibility Program. Any portion not paid in full at the time of defendant's release from prison shall be paid as a condition of supervised release. Victim's recovery is limited to the amount of its loss and defendant's liability for restitution ceases if and

when victim receives full restitution. Court finds the defendant does not have the ability to pay interest and therefore interest is waived.

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Within 72 hours of release from the Bureau of Prisons, defendant shall report in person to the probation office in the district to which he is released to be placed on supervised release.

While on supervised release, defendant shall not commit another federal, state or local crime, shall comply with standard conditions that have been adopted by this court and shall comply with the following additional conditions:

One, defendant shall not illegally possess a controlled substance. Supervised release must be revoked for possession of a controlled substance.

Two, defendant shall not possess a firearm, ammunition, destructive device or other dangerous weapon. Supervised release must be revoked for possession of a firearm, ammunition, destructive device or other dangerous weapon.

Three, defendant shall participate in a program of testing and, if necessary, treatment for substance abuse, said program approved by the probation officer until such time defendant is released from the program by the probation officer and/or the court. Further, the defendant shall be required to contribute to the cost of services for any such

treatment in an amount to be determined by the probation officer, but not to exceed actual costs. Defendant shall submit to one drug urinalysis within 15 days of being placed on supervision, and at least two periodic tests thereafter.

Four, defendant shall not purchase, possess and/or use a substance or device designed to alter in way or substitute defendant's urine specimen for drug testing. In addition, defendant shall not purchase, possess and/or use any device designed to be used for the submission of a third party urine specimen.

Five, defendant shall not use or possess alcohol.

Six, defendant shall pay restitution balance at a rate of not less than 10% of his gross monthly earnings, but in no event less than \$100 per month. First payment shall be made within 30 days of his release from the custody of the Bureau of Prisons.

Seven, defendant shall provide probation officer with access to any requested financial information.

Eight, defendant shall not incur any new credit card charges or open additional lines of credit without approval of the probation officer.

Nine, while any portion of the restitution remains outstanding, defendant shall provide the United States probation office with any change of address within 30 days.

Ten, defendant shall participate in a mental health

assessment and/or treatment program approved by the probation officer until such time as the defendant is released from the program by the court and/or the probation officer. Defendant shall be required to contribute to the cost of services for any such treatment in an amount to be determined by the probation officer. These costs shall not exceed the actual costs of the service. The probation officer is authorized to release defendant's pre-sentence investigation report to the treatment provider, if so requested.

11, defendant shall cooperate with the collection of DNA as directed by the probation officer.

Court also imposes a mandatory \$100 special assessment constituting a \$100 special assessment towards each count that the defendant has pled guilty, which shall be paid to the Clerk of Court forthwith.

Based on the information contained in the pre-sentence investigation report, the court finds the defendant does not have the ability to pay a fine and therefore waives imposition of any fine.

Sir, the reason for your sentence is as follows:

Court considers a sentence of 12 months and one day

imprisonment, two years supervised release and a stated

restitution to be sufficient, but no greater than necessary to

comply with the goals of sentencing, as set forth in Title 18

United States Code Section 3553(a)(2), which are to reflect

the seriousness of the offense, promote respect for the law and provide for just punishment for the offense, afford adequate deterrence to criminal conduct, to protect the public from further crimes by this defendant and to provide the defendant with need educational, vocational training, medical care and other correctional treatment in the most effective manner. The court has considered all the sentencing factors set forth in Title 18 United States Code Section 3553(a), including those presented by the government and defense and as set forth in the pre-sentence investigation report and addendum thereto.

Further, the court has considered the following:

First, the court has considered the nature and circumstances of the offense. Defendant pled guilty to obstruction of law enforcement during a civil disorder in violation of Title 18

United States Code Section 231(a)(3) and Section 2. Defendant engaged in serious criminal conduct that's further addressed in the pre-sentence investigation report and the court incorporates by reference Paragraphs 12 through 17 of the pre-sentence investigation report as part of the basis upon which this court bases its sentence.

By way of summary only: On May 30, 2020, during a civil disorder in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, police officers entered a police vehicle and attempted to drive it away from the area of unrest. While multiple officers were in the

vehicle driving away from the area, defendant picked up a piece of concrete and threw it through the front passenger window. The object struck the officer that was seated in the front passenger's seat in the arm, causing a bruise that did not require medical treatment. Defendant also threw another projectile at a vehicle, a piece of concrete -- and a piece of concrete at a second unoccupied vehicle. In light of this conduct, an officer was hurt, fortunately suffered only a minor injury. Court finds a sentence of non-incarceration not to be appropriate.

I distinguish this case factually from those that damaged property, in particular a police car, but did not attempt to cause physical injury to anyone. In those other cases which I've had sentencings, the car was empty.

This car was actually trying to remove itself from the area and it was not -- the defendant didn't throw one projectile, he through multiple projectiles, risking serious harm to police officers, who were simply trying to do their job and trying to actually leave the scene.

Second, the court also finds defendant -- considered defendant's criminal, family, social history and personal characteristics as outlined in the pre-sentence investigation report at Paragraphs 31 through 57, which the court incorporates by reference as part of the basis of the court's sentence.

Defendant is approximately 33 years old, he's single, has custody of three young children -- and has three young children. And he has primary custody of his oldest son.

Defendant has a commercial driver's license. He's been working at a restaurant since July 2021.

This is not defendant's first criminal offense.

Defendant has one prior conviction for DUI, for which he was sentenced to three to six day imprisonment and six months probation. Defendant also has a case pending for his conduct on that same date in state court, which he has or will receive a sentence of probation as mentioned by counsel today, and is also mentioned by counsel in its sentencing memorandum on behalf of the defendant.

Defendant has a history of alcohol abuse and mental health history, which is why the court has ordered conditions relating to mental health assessment and treatment, if necessary, and substance abuse testing, if necessary.

Third, the court has considered the kinds of sentences available for this offense and the sentencing guidelines sentence under the advisory guidelines and applicable policy statements adopted by the sentencing commission.

Fourth, the court considered the need to avoid unwarranted sentencing disparities among defendants with similar records that were found guilty of similar conduct,

including other defendants that have already been sentenced in this case.

As I said, I've made a distinction between those who caused property damage and those that -- to an unoccupied vehicle, and this defendant who threw projectiles at an occupied police vehicle. Fortunately, only injuring one officer in a minor way, but the serious harm could have been caused.

Fifth, the court has considered the need to provide restitution to any of the victims of this offense.

On behalf of the government, does my statement of reasons adequately address all objections, concerns and issues raised?

MR. LUSTY: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Are there any sentencing factors under 3553(a) that the court has failed to address?

MR. LUSTY: No, Your Honor.

THE COURT: On behalf of the defendant, does my statement of reasons adequately address all objections, concerns and issues raised?

MR. NIGHTINGALE: It does.

THE COURT: Are there any other sentencing factors under Section 3553(a) that the court has failed to address?

MR. NIGHTINGALE: No, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Have you had time to talk to your client

about his right to appeal?

MR. NIGHTINGALE: I'm sorry?

THE COURT: Have you had an opportunity to talk to your client about his right to appeal?

MR. NIGHTINGALE: Yes, Your Honor. We've discussed that. And we understand that we did waive the majority of our appellate rights.

THE COURT: Sir, except as otherwise waived in the plea agreement, you have the right to appeal from the orders of this court, judgment of guilty and/or the sentence imposed. You have a right to be represented by an attorney at no cost to you. If you cannot afford them, certified copies of necessary records and transcripts will be furnished at the expense of the United States government. If you appeal, the notice of appeal must be filed within 14 days of today, otherwise you will lose your right to appeal. If you request, the Clerk of Court will immediately prepare and file of notice of appeal on your behalf.

Do you wish to appeal, sir?

THE DEFENDANT: I do not, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Do you understand if you change your mind and decide to appeal, any notice of appeal must be filed within 14 days of today, otherwise you will lose your right to appeal?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: And if you change your mind, decide to appeal, you'll use your current counsel to file any notice of appeal. Correct?

THE DEFENDANT: Correct, Your Honor.

THE COURT: All right. Defendant is not in custody. He was on bond. So we need to talk about whether or not the defendant may voluntarily surrender or whether he needs to be taken into custody today. What's the government's position?

MR. LUSTY: We defer to the court, Your Honor.

MR. NIGHTINGALE: Your Honor, obviously I would ask that my client would be allowed to self-report. That would help with his designation in the Bureau of Prisons. That will also allow him to spend the Christmas holiday with his children and to prepare for reporting for a sentence of incarceration. Other than my client's DUI sentence, he has not experienced a period of incarceration. I would ask that he be allowed to self-report for designation purposes. And I would ask the court recommend that he be -- that the Bureau of Prisons place him at FCI Morgantown where there's a camp, which would be more appropriate given my client's lack of criminal history.

THE COURT: Any objection to that request?

MR. LUSTY: No, Your Honor.

THE COURT: So we'll request he be incarcerated as close to the Western District of Pennsylvania, in particular

to the federal correctional institution in Morgantown. I don't think this period of time is probably long enough FOR him to participate in the 500-hour drug treatment program, but do you want a recommendation that he participate in drug or alcohol treatment program, as available?

MR. NIGHTINGALE: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: And I realize he's had some training. Is there any particular training he might like to receive while he's incarcerated?

MR. NIGHTINGALE: Well, he does have his CDL. Is there any particular vocational training you would be interested in while incarcerated?

THE DEFENDANT: I don't have anything off the top of my head right now.

MR. NIGHTINGALE: No, Your Honor.

THE COURT: On behalf of the probation office, is there any reason to take the defendant into custody today or are you willing to continue his supervision and have him voluntarily surrender?

PROBATION OFFICER: There are no issues that we're aware of, Your Honor, that would not allow him to remain on bond pending voluntary surrender.

THE COURT: Pursuant to Title 18 United States Code Sections 3143(a) and 3145(c), the court finds by clear and convincing evidence the defendant is not a flight risk based

upon his ties to the community. Because of his lack of criminal history, he's not a danger to anyone or to the community. And that there's exceptional circumstances in this case, including his need to provide for one or more of his children. Therefore, the court orders that the defendant shall voluntarily surrender to the institution designated by the Bureau of Prisons as notified by the United States

Marshals Service, but not later than the 1st day of February 2022, which would permit the defendant to spend time with his family over the holidays and provide for his children.

Up until and including that time, defendant shall remain subject to the conditions previously established by the United States Magistrate Judge Dodge as part of his pretrial release. It is therefore ordered that the existing order for release remain in effect subject to the standard conditions of pretrial release as set forth in the order setting conditions of release plus the following additional conditions:

If defendant has a passport, then within ten days defendant shall surrender the passport as directed by the probation office, which shall hold said passport until such term of supervised release complete.

Defendant shall not depart from the Western District of Pennsylvania.

Defendant shall refrain from possession of a firearm, ammunition, destructive device or other dangerous weapon.

Defendant shall refrain the use of alcohol.

Defendant shall refrain from the use of or unlawful possession of a narcotic drug unless prescribed by a licensed medical practitioner.

Defendant shall submit to any method of testing required by pretrial services to determine if the defendant is using a prohibited substance.

Defendant shall participate in a program of inpatient or outpatient substance abuse therapy and counseling, if deemed advisable by the pretrial service office.

Defendant shall refrain from obstruction in any fashion of the efficiency and accuracy of prohibited substance testing.

Defendant shall report as soon as possible to pretrial service office any contact with law enforcement personnel, including but not limited to, any arrest, questioning or traffic stop. Understand, sir?

THE DEFENDANT: Yes, Your Honor.

THE COURT: Do you further understand you must report as notified by the United States Marshal Service, but no later than the 1st day of January -- excuse me, 1st day of February, 2022, or you'll be guilty of violating The Bail Reform Act, which carries a maximum sentence of ten years imprisonment consecutive to any other sentence I impose, a fine of \$250,000 plus interest and could result in forfeiture of any bond

1 posted? 2 THE DEFENDANT: Yes, Your Honor. 3 THE COURT: Anything else on behalf of the 4 government? 5 MR. LUSTY: No. Thank you, Your Honor. 6 THE COURT: Anything else on behalf of the defendant? 7 MR. NIGHTINGALE: No, Your Honor. 8 THE COURT: I want to thank both counsel. You did an 9 excellent job for your respective clients. So I wanted to compliment you in that regard. 10 Mr. Allen, I wish you the best. Hopefully, that time 11 12 in prison will pass quickly for you and you'll be able to return back to society and resume being a productive citizen. 13 14 THE DEFENDANT: Thank you, Your Honor. THE COURT: Thank you, sir. I adjourn this hearing. 15 16 CERTIFICATE 17 I, MARSIA L. BALOBECK, certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript from the record of proceedings in the 18 above-entitled case. 19 \s\ Marsia L. Ba<u>lobeck</u> 20 10/27/2022 Date of Certification MARSIA L. BALOBECK 21 Official Court Reporter 22 23 24

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